

Bagdad  
on the  
Subway

by  
Stephen  
Leacock





## Why people should own and read books

**B**Y ALL means, read books. When you reach old age you will look back and realize that nothing else, except tobacco, has brought you so much good. But there is one condition to be observed. You must read with intellectual honesty. If you like a book, and can read it for its own sake, then read it; if not, lay it aside.

Don't read Browning's "Andrea del Sarto" and "Pippa Passes" when you know in your heart that you would rather saw wood. Let Pippa pass. She is not for you. If you find that you like Laura Jean Libbey's books better than Ibsen's, read Laura Jean Libbey. Never mind Ibsen's feelings. It is no reflection on him.

Anyway, I doubt Dante myself. Hand me that last book by O. Henry. Thank you.

*Stephen Leacock*

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## The Amazing Genius of O. Henry\*

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**H**IS real name was William Sydney Porter. His *nom de plume*, O. Henry,—hopelessly tame and colourless from a literary point of view,—seems to have been adopted in a whimsical moment, with no great thought as to its aptness. It is amazing that he should have selected so poor a pen name. Those who can remember their first shock of pleased surprise on hearing that Rudyard Kipling's name was really Rudyard Kipling, will feel something like pain in learning that any writer could deliberately christen himself "O. Henry."

The circumstance is all the more peculiar inasmuch as O. Henry's works abound in ingenious nomenclature. The names that he claps on his Central American adventurers are things of joy to the artistic eye,—General Perrico Ximenes Villablanca Falcon! Ramon Angel de las Cruces Miraflores, president of the republic of Anchuria! Don Señor el Coronel Encarnacion Rios! The very spirit of romance and revolution breathes through them! Or what more beautiful for a Nevada town than Topaz City? What name more appropriate for a commuter's suburb than Floralhurst? And these are only examples among thousands. In all the two hundred stories that O. Henry wrote, there is hardly

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**"He that is without sin, let  
him first cast a stone—"**

*A woman crouched down against the iron fence of the park, sobbing turbulently. Her rich fur coat dragged on the ground. Her diamond ringed hands clung to the slender plainly dressed working girl who leaned close, trying to console.*

*Dan was the cause of it all. Dan and that chap with the automobile and the diamonds. O. Henry saw, and seeing, understood. He tells about it all in one of his wonderful stories.*



\* This story of O. Henry's life is taken from Stephen Leacock's book "Essays and Literary Studies," published by John Lane Co., New York.



a single name that is inappropriate or without a proper literary suggestiveness, except the name that he signed to them.

O. Henry,—as he signed himself,—was born in 1867, most probably at Greensboro, North Carolina. For the first thirty or thirty-five years of his life, few knew or cared where he was born, or whither he was going. Now that he has been dead five years he shares already with Homer the honour of a disputed birthplace.

While still a boy, O. Henry (there is no use in calling him anything else) went to Texas, where he worked for three years on a ranch. He drifted into the city of Houston and got employment on a newspaper. A year later he bought a newspaper of his own in Austin, Texas, for the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars. He rechristened it *The Rolling Stone*, wrote it, and even illustrated it, himself. But the paper was too well named. Its editor himself rolled away from it, and from the shores of Texas the wandering restlessness that was characteristic of him wafted him down the great gulf to the enchanted land of Central America. Here he “knocked around,” as he himself has put it, “mostly among refugees and consuls.” Here too was laid the foundation of much of his most characteristic work,—his *Cabbages and Kings*, and such stories as *Phæbe* and *The Fourth in Salvador*.

### ***Latin America fascinated O. Henry***

The languor of the tropics; the sunlit seas with their open bays and broad sanded beaches, with green palms nodding on the slopes above,—white-painted steamers lazily at anchor,—quaint Spanish towns, with adobe houses and wide squares, sunk in their noon-day sleep,—beautiful Señoritas drowsing away the afternoon in hammocks; the tinkling of the mule bells on the mountain track above the town,—the cries of unknown birds issuing from the dense green of the unbroken jungle—and at night in the soft darkness, the low murmur of the guitar, soft thrumming with the voice of love—these are the sights and sounds of O. Henry’s Central America. Here live and move his tattered revolutionists, his gaudy generals of the mimic army of the existing republic; hither ply his white-painted steamers of the fruit trade; here the American consul, with a shadowed past and \$600 a year, drinks away the remembrance of his northern energy and his college education in the land of forgetfulness. Hither the absconding banker from the States is dropped from the passing steamer, clutching tight



Dear sir  
Henceforth to consider me  
as dead to you forever. I  
have loved you too well to  
blight your career. I have  
succumbed to the insidious  
wiles of this wicked world.  
I am loved forever in the fair,  
butal maze of Bohemia  
Farewell  
from your Medora

**"Extradited from Bohemia"**

Poor little letter! When Hoskins got it, he set right out for New York City as fast as he could go and—when he got there—But it's all told better by O. Henry in one more of his wonderful stories.

in his shaking hand his valise of stolen dollars; him the disguised detective, lounging beside the little drinking shop, watches with a furtive eye. And here in this land of enchantment the broken lives, the wasted hopes, the ambition that was never reached, the frailty that was never conquered, are somehow pieced together and illuminated into what they might have been,—and even the reckless crime and the open sin, viewed in the softened haze of such an atmosphere, are half forgiven.

Whether this is the "real Central America" or not, is of no consequence. It probably is not. The "real Central America" may best be left to the up-to-date specialist, the energetic newspaper expert, or the travelling lady correspondent,—to all such persons, in fact, as are capable of writing *Six Weeks in Nicaragua*, or *Costa Rica As I Saw It*. Most likely the Central America of O. Henry is as gloriously unreal as the London of Charles Dickens, or the Salem of Nathaniel Hawthorne, or any other beautiful picture of the higher truth of life that can be shattered into splinters in the distorting prism of cold fact.

From Central America O. Henry rolled, drifted or floated,—there was no method in his life,—back to Texas again. Here he worked





### Who Was "The Guilty Party?"

*When this young girl—slipped far from the world's idea of virtue—her heart breaking with outraged love—sent a knife into the heart of the man, women called her guilty—men called him guilty—but O. Henry, who knows the hearts of weak humans, who understands women, who sees only a faint line between the angel and the sinner—O. Henry found the guilt far back in another place—in the heart of a red-headed, unshaved, untidy party, who sat by his window and read, while his children played in the streets.*

ent kinds of tap-washers with seven different names; and there is a certain type of reader who is thereby conscious of seven different kinds of ignorance, and is fascinated forthwith. From pedantry of this sort O. Henry is entirely free. Even literal accuracy is nothing to him so long as he gets his effect. Thus he commences one of his stories with the brazen statement: "In Texas you may journey for a thousand miles in a straight line." You can't, of course; and O. Henry knew it. It is only his way of saying that Texas is a very big place. So with his tincture of aconite. It may be poisonous

for two weeks in a drug store. This brief experience supplied him all the rest of his life with local colour and technical material for his stories. So well has he used it that the obstinate legend still runs that O. Henry was a druggist. A strict examination of his work would show that he knew the names of about seventeen drugs and was able to describe the rolling of pills with the life-like accuracy of one who has rolled them. But it was characteristic of his instinct for literary values that even on this slender basis O. Henry was able to make his characters "take down from shelves" such mysterious things as *Sod. et. Pot. Tart.*, or discuss whether magnesia carbonate or pulverised glycerine is the best excipient, and in moments of high tragedy poison themselves with "tincture of aconite."

Whether these terms are correctly used or not I do not know. Nor can I conceive that it matters. O. Henry was a literary artist first, last and always. It was the effect and the feeling that he wanted. For technical accuracy he cared not one whit.

There is a certain kind of author who thinks to make literature by introducing, let us say, a plumber using seven different

or it may be not. But it sounds poisonous and that is enough for O. Henry. This is true art.

After his brief drug-store experience O. Henry moved to New Orleans. Even in his Texan and Central American days he seems to have scribbled stories. In New Orleans he set to work deliberately as writer. Much of his best work was poured forth with the prodigality of genius into the columns of the daily press without thought of fame. The money that he received, so it is said, was but a pittance. Stories that would sell to-day,—were O. Henry alive and writing them now,—for a thousand dollars, went for next to nothing. Throughout his life money meant little or nothing to him. If he had it, he spent it, loaned it or gave it away. When he had it not he bargained with an editor for the payment in advance of a story which he meant to write, and of which he exhibited the title or a few sentences as a sample, and which he wrote, faithfully enough, “when he got round to it.” The story runs of how one night a beggar on the street asked O. Henry for money. He drew forth a coin from his pocket in the darkness and handed it to the man. A few moments later the beggar looked at the coin under a street lamp, and being even such a beggar as O. Henry loved to write about, he came running back with the words, “Say, you made a mistake, this is a twenty-dollar gold piece.” “I know it is,” said O. Henry, “but it’s all I have.”

The story may not be true. But at least it ought to be.



**“I Am Just a Poor Boy From the Country”**

*“Oh, pshaw! Leave me alone! I am just a poor boy from the country.” Sensitive, avoiding the lime light, this is the whimsical answer that O. Henry—America’s greatest short story writer—made when the world tried to lionize him. He preferred the shadows of the street corners, where he could gaze upon the hurrying stream of life, deep into the hearts of men and picture for you the generosity, ferocity, kindness, want, devotion, the laughter and the mockery, the feverish activity and the stark despair—all the complex interplay of human emotions which go to make life.*



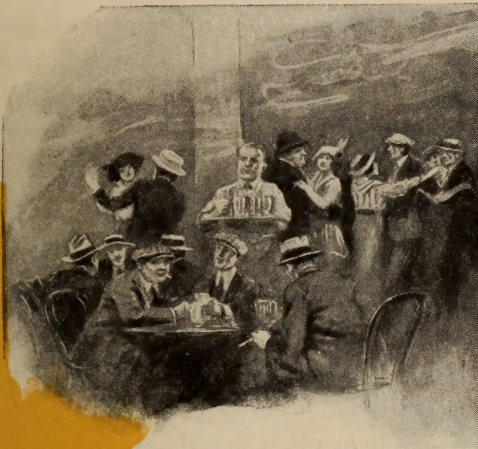
From New Orleans O. Henry moved to New York and became a unit among the "four million" dwellers in flats and apartment houses and sand-stone palaces who live within the roar of the elevated railway, and from whom the pale light of the moon and the small effects of the planetary system are overwhelmed in the glare of the Great White Way. Here O. Henry's finest work was done,—inimitable, unsurpassable stories that make up the volumes entitled *The Four Million*, *The Trimmed Lamp* and *The Voice of the City*.

Marvellous indeed they are. Written off-hand with the bold carelessness of the pen that only genius dare use, but revealing behind them such a glowing of the imagination and such a depth of understanding of the human heart as only genius can make manifest.

### *Bagdad on the Subway*

What O. Henry did for Central America he does again for New York. He waves a wand over it and it becomes a city of mystery and romance. It is no longer the roaring, surging metropolis that we thought we knew, with its clattering elevated, its unending crowds, and on every side the repellent selfishness of the rich, the grim struggle of the poor, and the listless despair of the outcast. It has become, as O. Henry loves to call it, Bagdad upon the Subway. The glare has gone. There is a soft light suffusing the city. Its corner drug-stores turn to enchanted bazaars. From the open doors of its restaurants and palm rooms, there issues such a melody of softened music that we feel we have but to cross the threshold and there is Bagdad waiting for us beyond. A transformed waiter hands us to a chair at a little table,—Arabian, I will swear it,—beside an enchanted rubber tree. There is red wine such as Omar Khayyam drank, here on Sixth Avenue. At the tables about us are a strange and interesting crew,—dervishes in the disguise of American business men, caliphs masquerading as tourists, bedouins from Syria and fierce fantassins from the desert turned into western visitors from Texas, and among them—can we believe our eyes,—houris from the inner harems of Ispahan and Candahar, whom we mistook but yesterday for the ladies of a Shubert chorus! As we pass out we pay our money to an enchanted cashier with golden hair,—sitting behind glass,—under the spell of some magician without a doubt,—and then taking O. Henry's hand we wander forth among the ever changing scenes of night adventure, the mingled tragedy and humour of *The Four Million*,





**Finish This Story for Yourself—**

*For the first time—this girl—starved of pleasure and of pretty clothes—looked into the dance hall, yellow lighted, noisy, hot steaming—but gay—gay and filled with girls and men—who to her loneliness looked good. That night she went—and then—but let O. Henry tell you the rest of this story.*

that his pen alone can depict. Now did ever Haroun al Raschid and his viziers, wandering at will in the narrow streets of their Arabian city, meet such varied adventure as lies before us, strolling hand in hand with O. Henry in the new Bagdad that he reveals.

But let us turn to the stories themselves. O. Henry wrote in all two hundred short stories of an average of about fifteen pages each. This was the form in which his literary activity shaped itself by instinct. A novel he never wrote. A play he often meditated but never achieved. One of his books,—*Cabbages and Kings*,—can make a certain claim to be continuous. But even this is rather a collection of little stories than a single piece of fiction. But it is an error of the grossest kind to say that O. Henry's work is not sustained. In reality his canvas is vast. His New York stories, like those of Central America or of the west, form one great picture as gloriously comprehensive in its scope as the lengthiest novels of a Dickens or the canvas of a Da Vinci. It is only the method that is different, not the result.

It is hard indeed to illustrate O. Henry's genius by the quotation



of single phrases and sentences. The humour that is in his work lies too deep for that. His is not the comic wit that explodes the reader into a huge guffaw of laughter and vanishes. His humour is of that deep quality that smiles at life itself and mingles our amusement with our tears.

Still harder is it to try to shew the amazing genius of O. Henry as a "plot maker," as a designer of incident. No one better than he can hold the reader in suspense. Nay, more than that, the reader scarcely knows that he is "suspended," until at the very close of the story O. Henry, so to speak, turns on the lights and the whole tale is revealed as an entirety. But to do justice to a plot in a few paragraphs is almost impossible. Let the reader consider to what a few poor shreds even the best of our novels or plays is reduced, when we try to set forth the basis of it in the condensed phrase of a text-book of literature, or diminish it to the language of the "scenario" of a moving picture. Let us take an example.

We will transcribe our immortal *Hamlet* as faithfully as we can into a few words with an eye to explain the plot and nothing else. It will run about as follows:

"Hamlet's uncle kills his father and marries his mother, and Hamlet is so disturbed about this that he either is mad or pretends to be mad. In this condition he drives his sweetheart insane and she drowns, or practically drowns, herself. Hamlet then kills his uncle's chief adviser behind an arras either in mistake for a rat, or not. Hamlet then gives poison to his uncle and his mother, stabs Laertes and kills himself. There is much discussion among the critics as to whether his actions justify us in calling him insane."

There! The example is, perhaps, not altogether convincing. It does not seem somehow, faithful though it is, to do Shakespeare

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#### **The Enchanted Kiss**

*With violets and champagne and electricity to help, he dared to kiss her—there in that Spanish built town on the border, where the color of the Mexican has fired the cold courage of the Anglo-Saxon to a spirit of love and adventure—where men kill and women kiss on the jump. There this sly young man kissed the beautiful girl—and later, carefully*





justice. But let it at least illustrate the point under discussion. The mere bones of a plot are nothing. We could scarcely form a judgment on female beauty by studying the skeletons of a museum of anatomy.

But with this distinct understanding, let me try to present the outline of a typical O. Henry story. I select it from the volume entitled *The Gentle Grafter*, a book that is mainly concerned with the wiles of Jeff Peters and his partners and associates. Mr. Peters, who acts as the narrator of most of the stories, typifies the perennial fakir and itinerant grafter of the Western States,—ready to turn his hand to anything from selling patent medicines under a naphtha lamp on the street corner of a western town to peddling bargain Bibles from farm to farm,—anything in short that does not involve work and carries with it the peculiar excitement of trying to keep out of the State penitentiary. All the world loves a grafter,—at least a genial and ingenious grafter,—a Robin Hood who plunders an abbot to feed a beggar, an Alfred Jingle, a Scapin, a Raffles,—or any of the multifarious characters of the world's literature who reveal the fact that much that is best in humanity may flourish even on the shadowy side of technical iniquity. Of this glorious company is Mr. Jefferson Peters. But let us take him as he is revealed in *Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet* and let us allow him to introduce himself and his business.

“I struck Fisher Hill,” Mr. Peters relates, “in a buckskin suit, moccasins, long hair and a thirty-carat diamond ring that I got from an actor in Texarkana. I don't know what he ever did with the pocket-knife I swapped him for it.

“I was Dr. Waugh-hoo, the celebrated Indian medicine man. I carried only one best bet just then, and that was Resurrection Bitters. It was made of life-

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*dressed in an elaborate wrapper with her little bare feet in white swansdown slippers, she waited for him to come. And when he did, just by accident she turned the light the wrong way. A laugh, a wiff of heliotrope, a groping little hand on his arm. What he did was the last thing you'd expect. Read this story and you will know why they call O. Henry master of the unexpected ending.*







### Love on The Mexican Border

*Sweetly she smiled into the eyes of both, kisses she took from both—the ruddy American and the dark-skinned Mexican. And in the strong arms of the man from the North, was it any wonder that for the moment she forgot that Pedro would soon be there? Her punishment? Men of the North laugh coldly and pass on, but the Southern brother below the Rio Grande loves, as he hates, with a singleness that knows no mercy. On this erring woman, going so gayly to her fate, O, Henry could look with excuse and pity, as he did on the weaknesses of women, always, everywhere, for he knew their small shoulders bear burdens that would break the backs of men.*

giving plants and herbs accidentally discovered by Ta-quala, the beautiful wife of the chief of the Choctaw Nation, while gathering truck to garnish a platter of boiled dog for an annual corn dance. . . .”

In the capacity of Dr. Waugh-hoo, Mr. Peters “struck Fisher Hill.” He went to a druggist and got credit for half a gross of eight-ounce bottles and corks, and with the help of the running water from the tap in the hotel room, he spent a long evening manufacturing Resurrection Bitters. The next evening the sales began. The bitters at fifty cents a bottle “started off like sweetbreads on toast at a vegetarian dinner.” Then there intervenes a constable with a German silver badge. “Have you got a city license?” he asks, and Mr. Peters’ medicinal activity comes to a full stop. The threat of prosecution under the law for practising medicine without a license puts Mr. Peters for the moment out of business.

He returns sadly to his hotel, pondering on his next move. Here by good fortune he meets a former acquaintance, a certain Andy Tucker, who has just finished a tour in the Southern States, working the Great Cupid Combination Package on the chivalrous and unsuspecting South.

“Andy,” says Jeff, in speaking of his friend’s credentials, “was a good street man: and he was more than that—he respected his profession and was satisfied with 300 per cent. profit. He had





### **What is it Makes Men Fight ?**

*In one short ugly sentence she stripped him of his manhood. In a moment of jest, she had cut deep into his heart. As he lay gazing at the blinking stars and the shells that shrieked and burst, there again rang in his ear that mocking laugh which had sent him flying to the front. She had the prettiest hair, the brightest eyes, the most tantalizing smile in all San Augustine. He would SHOW the world that a lion's heart beat in his little body.*

*The war closed and he went home—a Colonel and a hero. San Augustine was frenzied over its native son. Straight up the path to her home he walked, and then, the thing that happened wasn't at all what you think.*

plenty of offers to go into the illegitimate drug and garden seed business, but he was never to be tempted off the straight path."

Andy and Jeff take counsel together in long debate on the porch of the hotel.

And here, apparently, a piece of good luck came to Jeff's help. The very next morning a messenger brings word that the Mayor of the town is suddenly taken ill. The only doctor of the place is twenty miles away. Jeff Peters is summoned to the Mayor's bedside. . . . "This Mayor Banks," Jeff relates, "was in bed all but his whiskers and feet. He was making internal noises that would have had everybody in San Francisco hiking for the parks. A young man was standing by the bedside holding a cup of water. . . ." Mr. Peters, called to the patient's side, is very cautious. He draws attention to the fact that he is not a qualified practitioner, is not "a regular disciple of S. Q. Lapius."

The Mayor groans in pain. The young man at the bedside, introduced as Mr. Biddle, the Mayor's nephew, urges Mr. Peters, or Doctor Waugh-hoo,—in the name of common humanity to attempt a cure.



### *Is It Too Late?*

*These are the words that go with him—rich and young still—gay and light-hearted no longer. For in his mind he sees the lonely, brave girl in Brickdust Row—and knows that on his head and on the heads of his ancestors lies her sorrow. And now it is too late—too late. Still—but let the story be told by O. Henry.*

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Finally Jeff Peters promises to treat the Mayor by “scientific demonstration.” He proposes, he says, to make use of the “great doctrine of psychic financiering—of the enlightening school of long-distance subconscious treatment of fallacies and meningitis,—of that wonderful in-door sport known as personal magnetism.” But he warns the Mayor that the treatment is difficult. It uses up great quantities of soul strength. It comes high. It cannot be attempted under two hundred and fifty dollars.

The Mayor groans. But he yields. The treatment begins.

“You ain’t sick,” says Dr. Waugh-hoo, looking the patient right in the eye. “You ain’t got any pain. The right lobe of your perihelion is subsided.”

The result is surprising. The Mayor’s system seems to respond at once. “I do feel some better, Doc,” he says, “darned if I don’t.”

Mr. Peters assumes a triumphant air. He promises to return next day for a second and final treatment.

“I’ll come back,” he says to the young man, “at eleven. You may give him eight drops of turpentine and three pounds of steak. Good morning.”

Next day the final treatment is given. The Mayor is completely restored. Two hundred and fifty dollars, all in cash, is handed to





“Dr. Waugh-hoo.” The young man asks for a receipt. It is no sooner written out by Jeff Peters, than:

“‘Now do your duty, officer,’ says the Mayor, grinning much unlike a sick man.

“Mr. Biddle lays his hand on my arm.

“‘You’re under arrest, Dr. Waugh-hoo, alias Peters,’ says he, ‘for practising medicine without authority under the State law.’

“‘Who are you?’ I asks.

“‘I’ll tell you who he is,’ says Mr. Mayor, sitting up in bed. He’s a detective employed by the State Medical Society. He’s been following you over five counties. He came to me yesterday and we fixed up this scheme to catch you. I guess you won’t do any more doctoring around these parts, Mr. Fakir. What was it you said I had, Doc?’ the Mayor laughs, ‘compound—well, it wasn’t softening of the brain, I guess, anyway.’”

. . . . .

Ingenious, isn’t it? One hadn’t suspected it. But will the reader kindly note the conclusion of the story as it follows, handled with the lightning rapidity of a conjuring trick.

. . . . .

“‘Come on, officer,’ says I, dignified. ‘I may as well make the best of it.’ And then I turns to old Banks and rattles my chains. “‘Mr. Mayor,’ says I, ‘the time will come soon when you’ll believe that personal magnetism is a success. And you’ll be sure that it succeeded in this case, too.’

“And I guess it did.

“When we got nearly to the gate, I says: ‘We might meet somebody now, Andy. I reckon you better take ’em off, and——’ Hey? Why, of course it was Andy Tucker. That was his scheme; and that’s how we got the capital to go into business together.”

Now let us set beside this a story of a different type, *The Furnished Room*, which appears in the volume called *The Four Million*. It shows O. Henry at his best as a master of that supreme pathos that springs, with but little adventitious aid of time or circumstance, from the fundamental things of life itself. In the sheer art of narration there is nothing done by Maupassant that surpasses *The Furnished Room*. The story runs,—so far as one dare attempt to reproduce it without quoting it all word for word,—after this fashion.

The scene is laid in New York, in the lost district of the lower West Side, where the wandering feet of actors and one-week transients seek furnished rooms in dilapidated houses of fallen grandeur.

One evening after dark a youngman prowled among these crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he rested his lean hand-baggage upon the step and wiped the dust from his hat-band and forehead. The bell sounded faint and far away in some remote hollow depths. . . . "I have the third floor back vacant since a week back," says the landlady. . . . "It's a nice room. It ain't often vacant. I had some most elegant people in it last summer—no trouble at all and paid in advance to the minute. The water's at the end of the hall. Sprowls and Mooney kept it three months. They done a vaudeville sketch. Miss B'retta Sprowls, you may have heard of her,—Oh, that was just the stage name—right there over the dresser is where the marriage certificate hung, framed. The gas is here and you see there's plenty of closet room. It's a room every one likes. It never stays idle long——"

The young man takes the room, paying a week in advance. Then he asks:

"A young girl—Miss Vashner—Miss Eloise Vashner—do you remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing on the stage most likely."

The landlady shakes her head. They comes and goes, she tells him, she doesn't call that one to mind.

It is the same answer that he has been receiving, up and down, in the crumbling houses of the lost district, through weeks and months of wandering. No, always no. Five months of ceaseless interrogation and the inevitable negative. So much time spent by day in questioning managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audiences of theatres from allstar casts down to music halls so low that he dreaded to find what he most hoped for. . . . The young man, left in his sordid room of the third floor back, among its decayed furniture, its ragged brocade upholstery, sinks into a chair. The dead weight of despair is on him. . . . Then, suddenly, as he rested there, the room was filled with the strong, sweet odour of mignonette—the flower that she had always loved, the perfume that she had always worn. It is



as if her very presence was beside him in the empty room. He rises. He cries aloud, "What, dear?" as if she had called to him. She has been there in the room. He knows it. He feels it. Then eager, tremulous with hope, he searches the room, tears open the crazy chest of drawers, fumbles upon the shelves, for some sign of her. Nothing and still nothing,—a crumpled playbill, a half-smoked cigar, the dreary and ignoble small records of many a peripatetic tenant, but of the woman that he seeks, nothing. Yet still that haunting perfume that seems to speak her presence at his very side.

The young man dashes trembling from the room. Again he questions the landlady,—was there not, before him in the room, a young lady? Surely there must have been,—fair, of medium height, and with reddish gold hair? Surely there was?

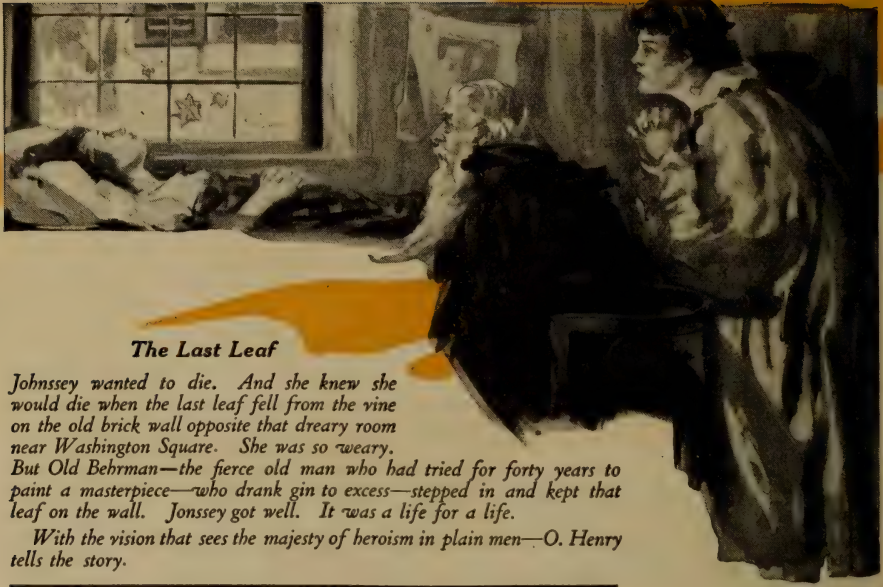
But the landlady, as if obdurate, shakes her head. "I can tell you again," she says, "'twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I said. Miss B'retta Sprowls, it was, in the theatres, but Missis Mooney she was. The marriage certificate hung, framed, on a nail over——"

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#### *Up From The Depths*

*The man had killed a man—he had met the girl—a stranger—at half-past one at Rooney's. A crisis came—and under the surface of shame, the souls of each stood forth to sacrifice—and to a better, cleaner life. To O. Henry it is given to see beneath the outer darkness—to the soul within. It's not the truth a man tells, but the spirit in which he tells it that counts. That is why O. Henry can write of things not always told, and yet have a clean, high spirit. He tells of those who would rather suffer hunger than be bad—and the others.*





**The Last Leaf**

*Johnsey wanted to die. And she knew she would die when the last leaf fell from the vine on the old brick wall opposite that dreary room near Washington Square. She was so weary. But Old Behrman—the fierce old man who had tried for forty years to paint a masterpiece—who drank gin to excess—stepped in and kept that leaf on the wall. Johnsey got well. It was a life for a life.*

*With the vision that sees the majesty of heroism in plain men—O. Henry tells the story.*

. . . The young man returns to his room. It is all over. His search is vain. The ebbing of his last hope has drained his faith. . . . For a time he sat staring at the yellow, singing gaslight. Then he rose. He walked to the bed and began to tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife he drove them tightly into every crevice around windows and door. When all was snug and taut he turned out the light, turned the gas full on again and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

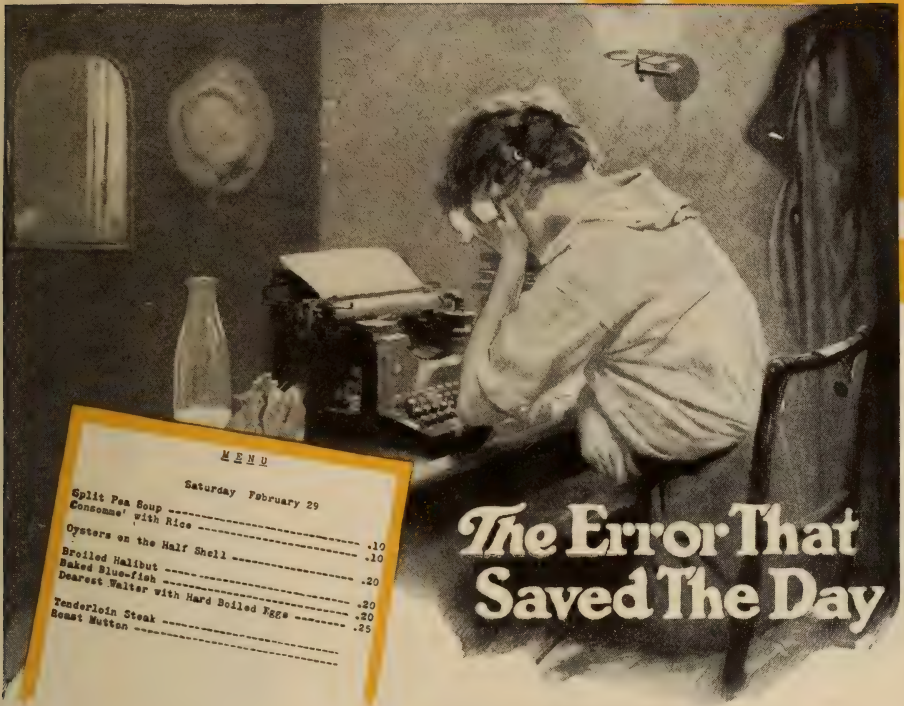
. . . . .  
And now let the reader note the ending paragraphs of the story, so told that not one word of it must be altered or abridged from the form in which O. Henry framed it.

. . . . .  
It was Mrs. McCool's night to go with the can for beer. So she fetched it and sat with Mrs. Purdy (the landlady) in one of those subterranean retreats where housekeepers foregather and the worm dieth seldom.

"I rented out my third floor, back, this evening," said Mrs. Purdy, across a fine circle of foam. "A young man took it. He went up to bed two hours ago."

"Now, did ye, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am?" said Mrs. McCool, with intense admiration. "You do be a wonder for rentin' rooms of





M E N U	
Saturday February 29	
Split Pea Soup	.....
Consomme' with Rice	.....
Oysters on the Half Shell	.....
Broiled Halibut	.....
Baked Bluefish	.....
Dearest Walter with Hard Boiled Eggs	.....
Tenderloin Steak	.....
Roast Mutton	.....

## The Error That Saved The Day

that kind. And did ye tell him, then?" she concluded in a husky whisper, laden with mystery.

*Imagine a dreary furnished room—a discouraged girl writing bills of fare for her meals. In a golden glow she saw the dandelions of last summer and the young farmer whom she had lost. No wonder she made the error, but it was a glorious error—it brought Walter to her again—and happiness. How? Ask O. Henry.*

"Rooms," said Mrs. Purdy, in her furriest tones, "are furnished for to rent. I did not tell him, Mrs. McCool."

"'Tis right ye are, ma'am; 'tis by renting rooms we kape alive. Ye have the rale sense for business, ma'am. There be many people will rayjict the rentin' of a room if they be tould a suicide has been after dyin' in the bed of it."

"As you say, we has our living to be making," remarked Mrs. Purdy.

"Yis, ma'am; 'tis true. 'Tis just one wake ago this day I helped ye lay out the third floor, back. A pretty slip of a colleen she was to be killin' herself wid the gas—a swate little face she had, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am."

"She'd a-been called handsome, as you say," said Mr. Purdy,



### **A Mystery of the Sixth Sense**

*In the little village at home he had lost her. He had searched for her the world over. He had longed for her and loved her. At last, he gave it up and came to New York to live in a shabby boarding house. There in his own room he found her. In the dust of the corners, he felt her presence. In the bureau drawers—in the very air, he knew her presence. She had been there but a short week before. Let O. Henry tell you the story.*

assenting but critical, "but for that mole she had a-grownin' by her left eyebrow. Do fill up your glass again, Mrs. McCool."

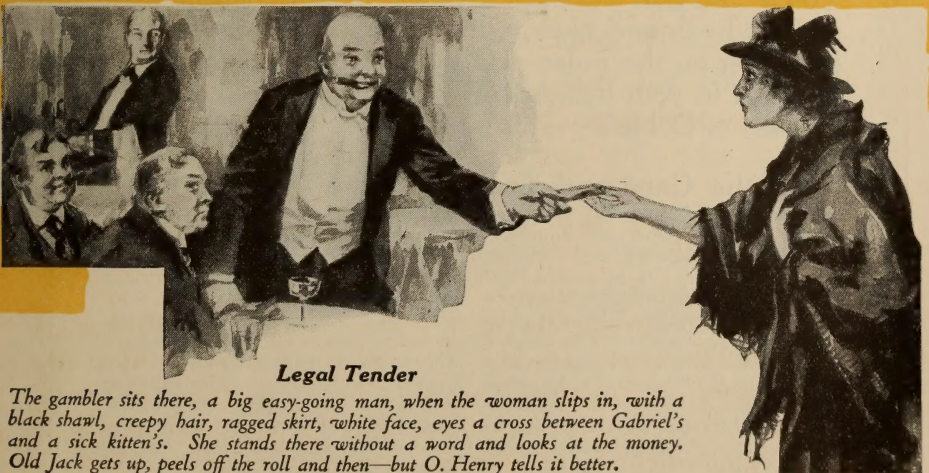
Beyond these two stories, I do not care to go. But if the reader is not satisfied let him procure for himself the story called *A Municipal Report* in the volume *Strictly Business*. After he has read it he will either pronounce O. Henry one of the greatest masters of modern fiction or else,—well, or else he is a jackass. Let us put it that way.

O. Henry lived some nine years in New York but little known to the public at large. Towards the end there came to him success, a competence and something that might be called celebrity if not fame. But it was marvellous how his light remained hid. The time came when the best known magazines eagerly sought his



work. He could have commanded his own price. But the notoriety of noisy success, the personal triumph of literary conspicuousness he neither achieved nor envied. A certain cruel experience of his earlier days—tragic, unmerited and not here to be recorded,—had left him shy of mankind at large and, in the personal sense, anxious only for obscurity. Even when the American public in tens and hundreds of thousands read his matchless stories, they read them, so to speak, in isolated fashion, as personal discoveries, unaware for years of the collective greatness of O. Henry's work viewed as a total. The few who were privileged to know him, seem to have valued him beyond all others and to have found him even greater than his work. And then, in mid-career as it seemed, there was laid upon him the hand of wasting and mortal disease, which brought him slowly to his end, his courage and his gentle kindness unbroken to the last. "I shall die," he said one winter with one of the quoted phrases that fell so aptly from his lips, "in the good old summer time." And "in the good old summer time" with a smile and a jest upon his lips he died. "Don't turn down the light," he is reported to have said to those beside his bed, and then, as the words of a popular song flickered across his mind, he added, "I'm afraid to go home in the dark."

That was five years ago. Since his death, his fame in America has grown greater and greater with every year. The laurel wreath that should have crowned his brow is exchanged for the garland laid upon his grave.



**Legal Tender**

*The gambler sits there, a big easy-going man, when the woman slips in, with a black shawl, creepy hair, ragged skirt, white face, eyes a cross between Gabriel's and a sick kitten's. She stands there without a word and looks at the money. Old Jack gets up, peels off the roll and then—but O. Henry tells it better.*

# O. HENRY

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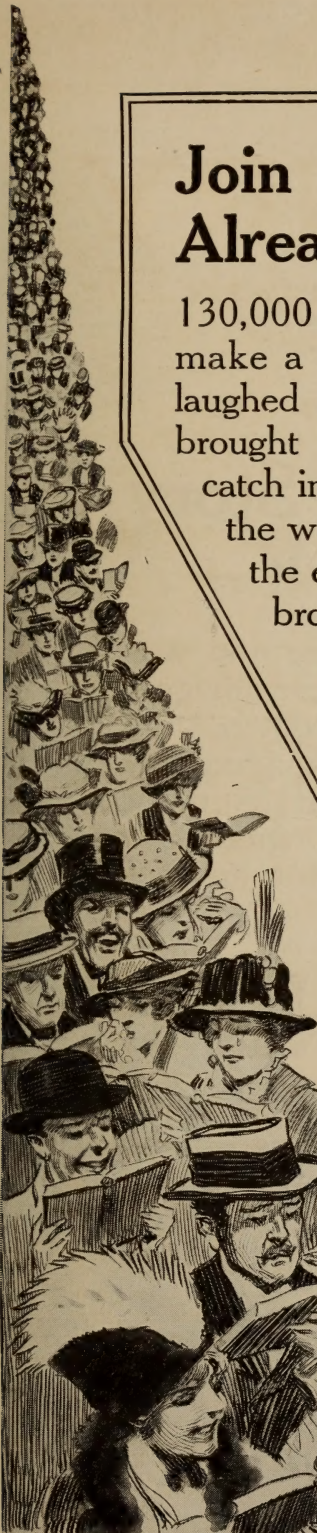
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## Finish This Story for Yourself—

The girl got \$6 a week and was lonely. "Piggy"—you can imagine his kind—was waiting downstairs. He knew where champagne and music could be had. But that night she didn't go. That was Lord Kitchener's doing. But another night?

# O. HENRY

tells about it in a story, with that full knowledge of women, with that frank facing of sex, and that clean mind that have endeared him to the men and women of the land.